

Analyzing 2022 Refugee Resettlement Resource Distribution in Tennessee

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Introduction

2022 saw a change in the way refugee resettlement is approached in the U.S. Influxes of refugees from Afghanistan and Ukraine overwhelmed resettlement agencies still recovering from budget and staffing cuts under the Trump administration.

This project focuses on the Tennessee Office for Refugees (TOR). TOR operates as the statewide refugee resettlement agency for Tennessee and coordinates resettlement efforts across the state.

As part of their ongoing efforts to improve the scope of resettlement services, TOR seeks to map the resettlement resources currently in place to determine the best areas for expansion.

Research Question
What is the current scope of refugee resettlement resources as they relate to the distribution of refugee households and where are the gaps in service coverage?

Methodology

Data collection: All refugee resettlement resource data and refugee household information was provided by TOR. Base map data was course data provided by MGA 60710.

Data Cleaning: Data on resettlement resources was categorized into five types: Advocacy and Legal (including legal aid and citizenship classes), Health (including mental and physical), Education and Employment (including after-school programs, summer camps, employment assistance and training programs), Food and Resource (including food pantries, community resources, and other household necessity providers), and English Language Services. 128 organizations were identified, 3 of which operate virtually and are not included in the map. 16 resources operate out of one or more locations. These resources are mapped by their primary location as that is the one that offers the most services. Organizations are listed by the primary type of service offered, though most offer more than one type of service.

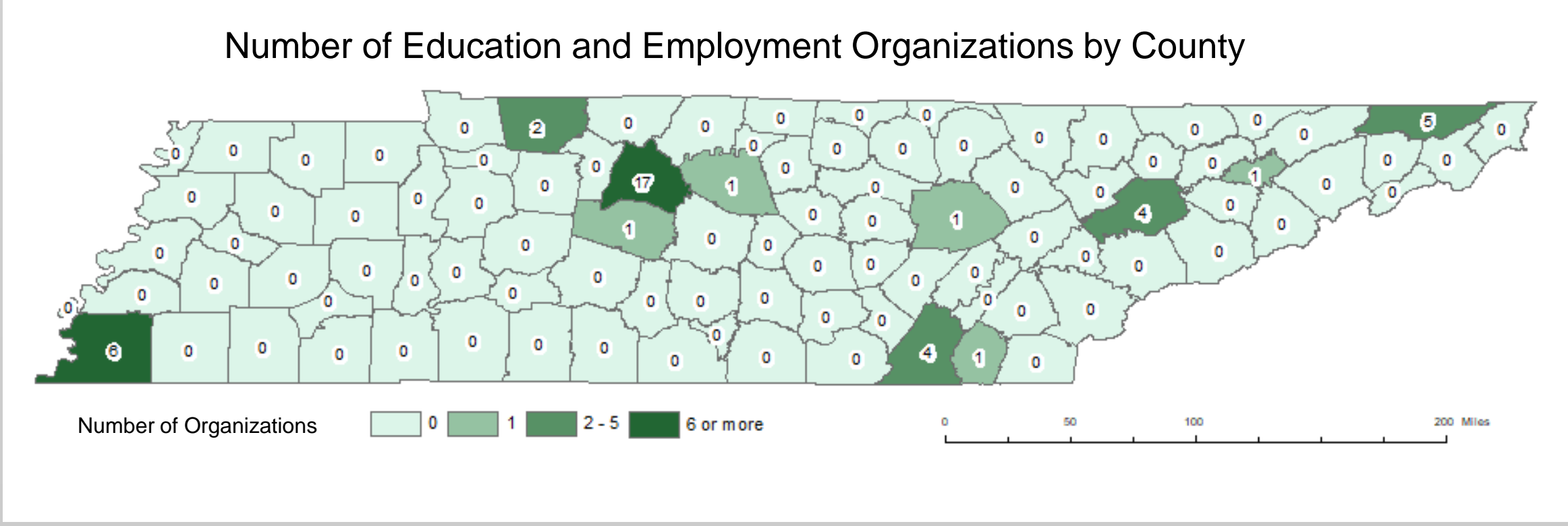
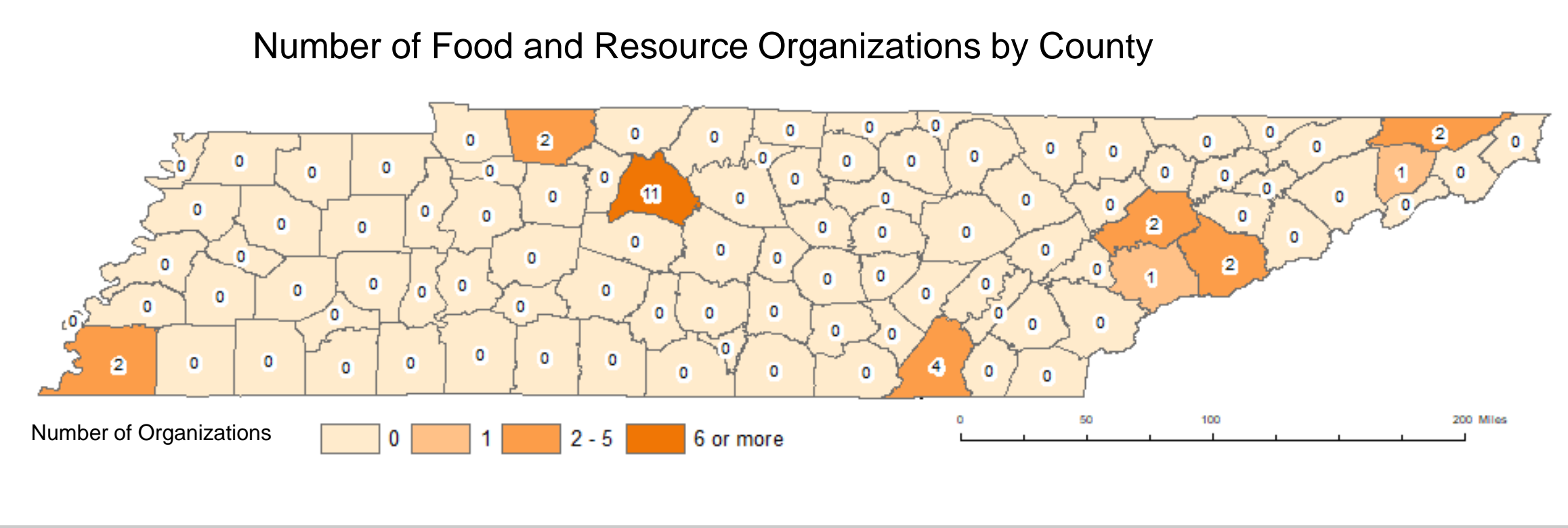
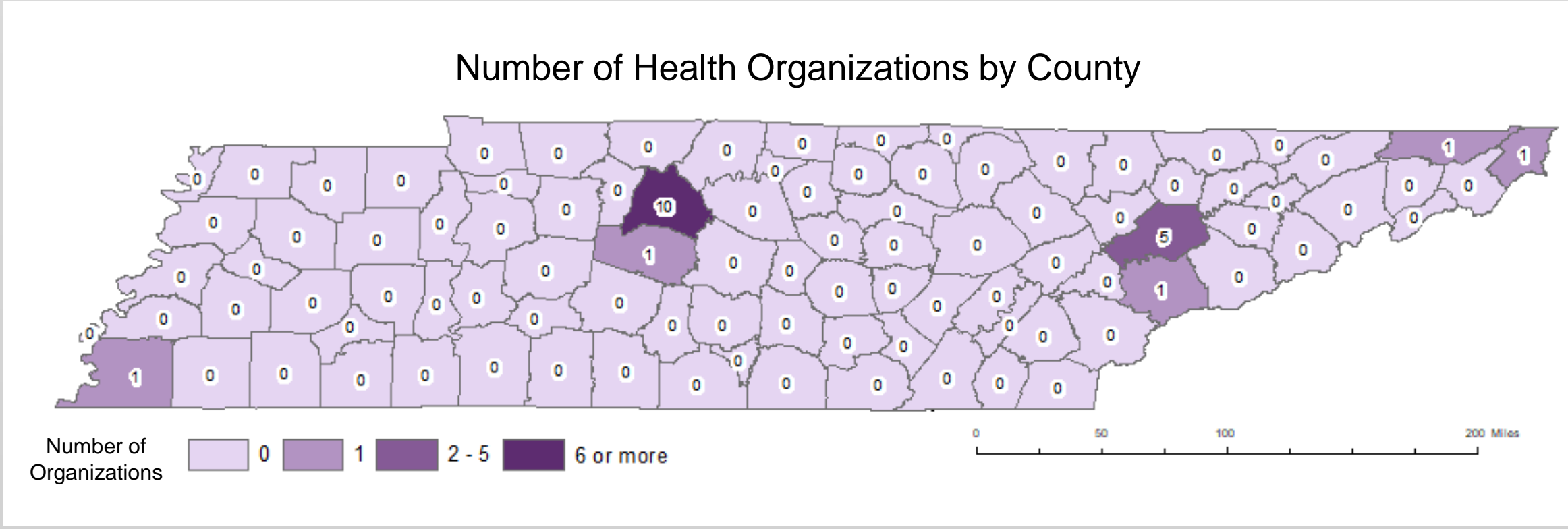
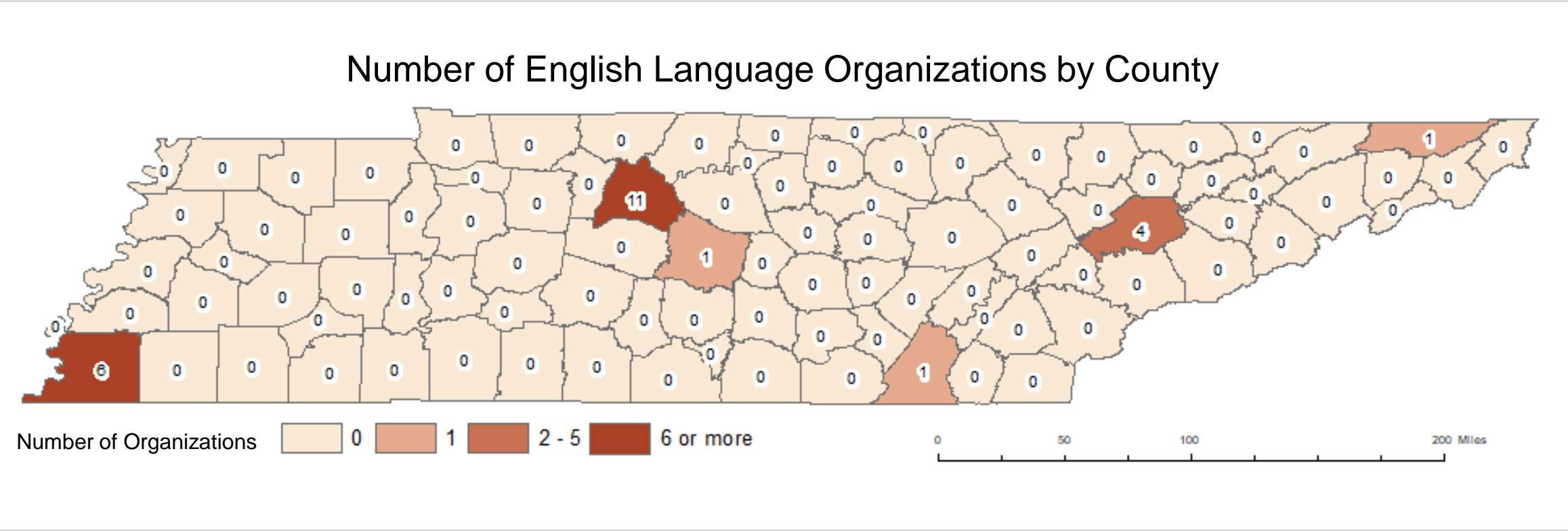
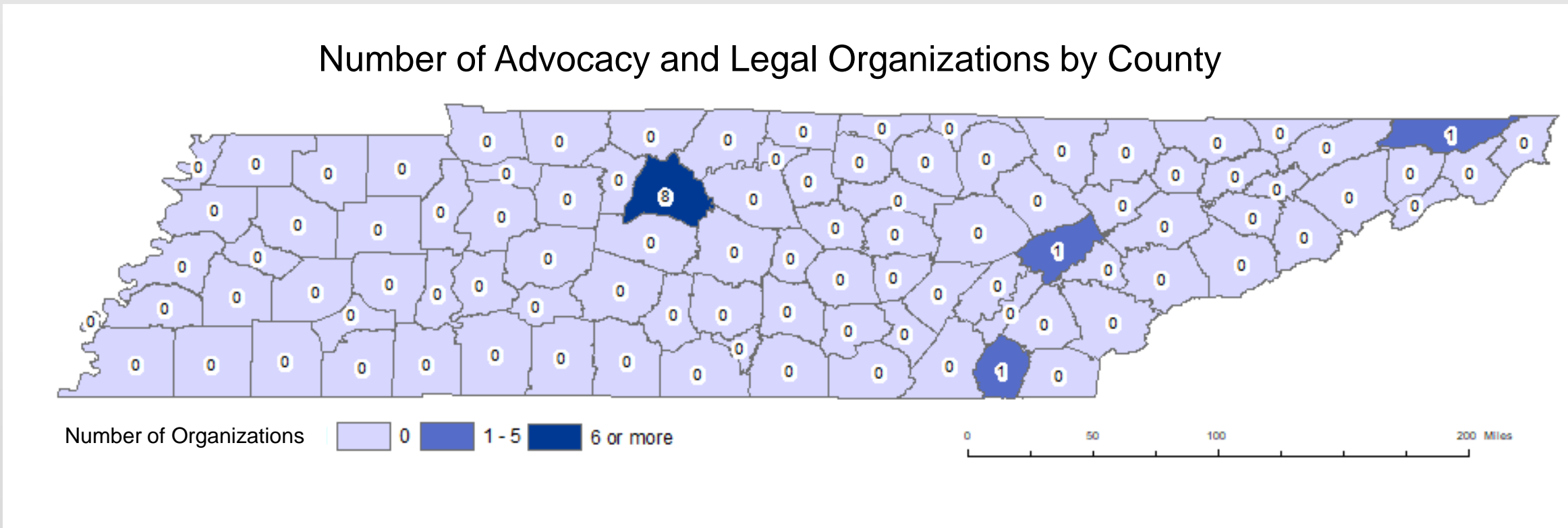
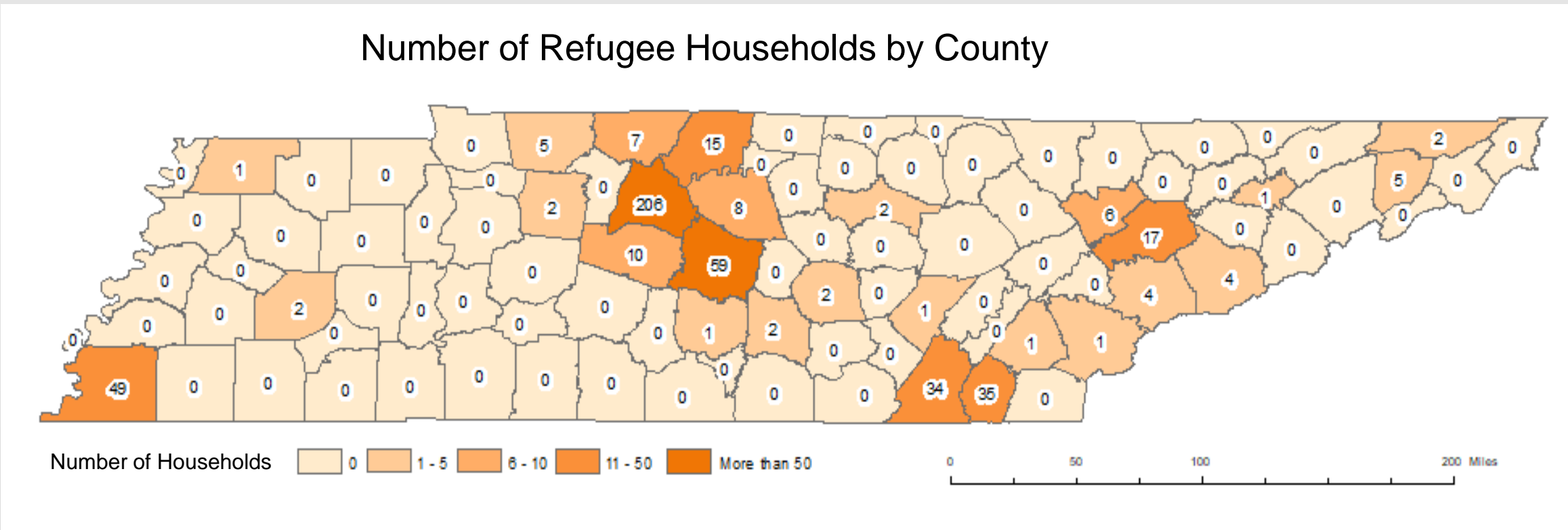
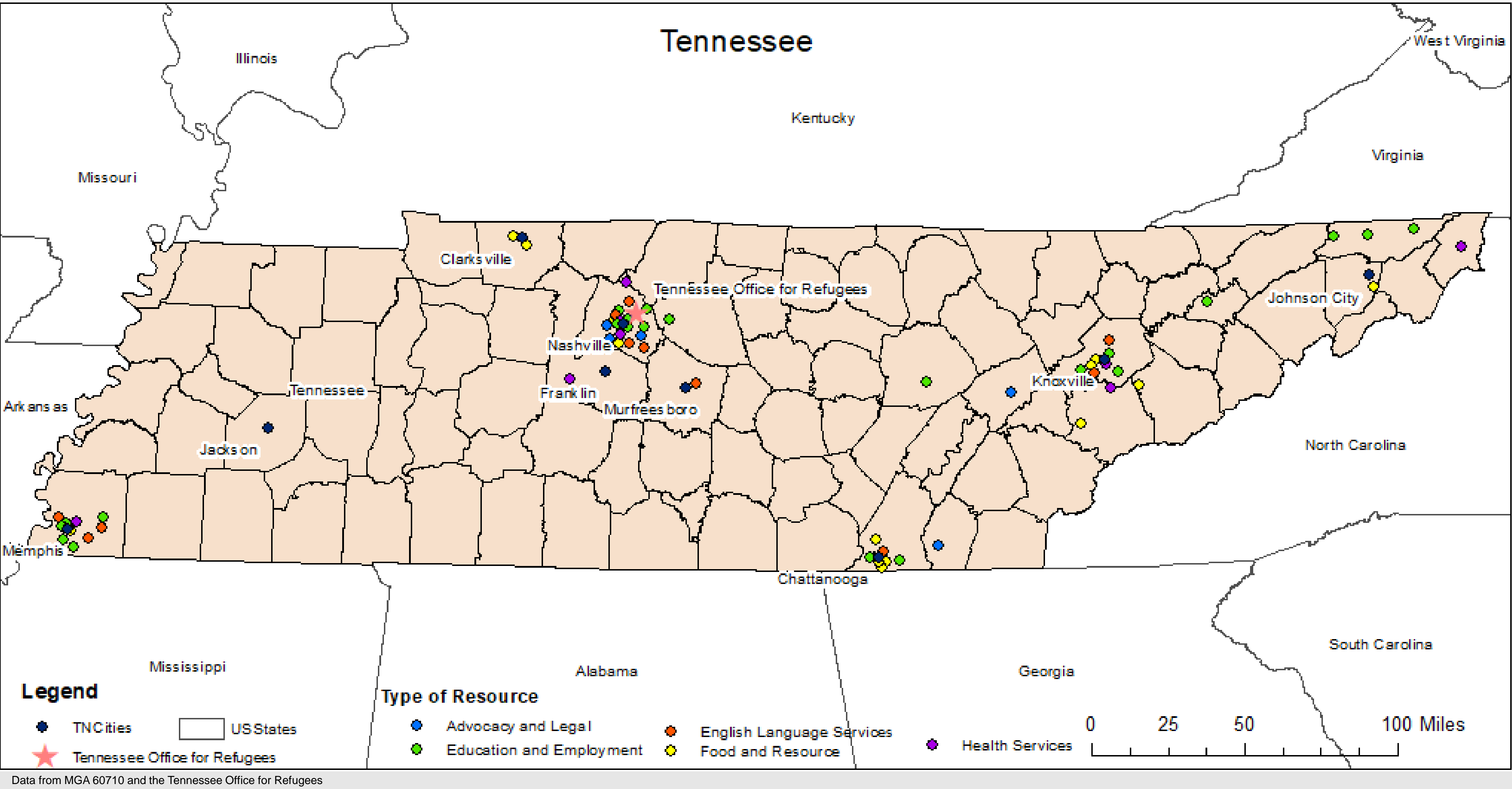
Refugee household data was collected from Salesforce and anonymized. Data includes refugee households with one or more members having arrived in the U.S. between April 2022 and October 2022, and who are currently receiving resettlement services. Household information was collected by zip code. 486 households were recorded.

Three types of maps were created to illustrate the distribution of resources as it relates to refugees across the state. The first map shows the state of Tennessee and its neighboring states, the distribution of resources by type, and marks the location of TOR. The second map shows the number of refugee households per county. The third map shows the number of resources, by type, in each county.

By comparing the maps showing the number of resources with the map showing the number of households, we can identify which counties would benefit from more of a certain type of resource.

Time limitations of this study reduced the number of households able to be mapped. The true number of households currently receiving resettlement resources is over 1,000.

Additionally, some organizations had more than one location and were only able to be mapped based on their primary location. Three organizations offer virtual services and could not be mapped as a result.



County	Type of Resource	Number of Available Resources
Bradley	English Language	1
	Health	0
	Advocacy and Legal	1
Hamilton	English Language	1
	Health	0
	Advocacy and Legal	1
Shelby	Health	1
	Advocacy and Legal	0
Knox	Advocacy and Legal	1

Recommendations

From the household map, resource maps, and table we can determine that Bradley, Hamilton, Shelby, and Knox counties could all benefit from increased funding and resources for certain resource types.

Bradley and Hamilton counties would benefit from increased resources and funding for organizations that offer English language, legal and advocacy, and health services. Shelby county would benefit from increased resources and funding for organizations offering health and advocacy and legal services. Knox county would benefit from resources and funding for advocacy and legal services.

There is no one perfect way that increased resources and funding for these services could look like. Given the under-resourced nature of refugee resettlement today, the best way to increase services in these counties may be to establish partnerships with existing organizations interested in expanding their operations to areas where their services are needed.

Additionally, offering virtual services where possible, with English language services, for example, is an excellent way to provide state-wide services at a low cost.

Finally, some organizations offer mobile clinics or pop-up services in locations they are not based in. While not a sustainable solution, partnering with organizations that offer these services may help meet short-term needs while long-term solutions are being developed.

Future Research

16 of the 124 mapped resources had multiple sites. This project only mapped the primary site for each of these resources.

Additionally, many organizations offer more than one type of service. This project mapped each resource by the primary type of resource provided.

Future research should focus on mapping all locations of each organization and should include all resources provided by each organization in order to portray a more accurate picture of resettlement resource distribution across the state.

Acknowledgements

All refugee resettlement resource and refugee household data was sourced from the Resource Development Coordinator VISTA at the Tennessee Office for Refugees, Molly Sullivan. Base map data including Tennessee counties, cities, and surrounding states were sourced from the course data for MGA 60710 GIS in Social Science. Not visually included but utilized for the creation of all maps was Tennessee zip code data, sourced from the U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line Shapefiles website. <https://www.census.gov/cgi-bin/geo/shapefiles/index.php?year=2022&layergroup=ZIP+Code+Tabulation+Areas>